



# The Cleveland Museum of Art

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## ART MUSEUM SALUTES MASTER PRINTMAKER GUSTAVE BAUMANN

(CLEVELAND, OH) -- German-born printmaker Gustave Baumann once said, "Given a free choice in the matter, I would have selected the Southwest as the place to be born." This artist's inspired interpretations of the most breathtaking scenery of Arizona, New Mexico, and the Pacific Coast are featured in an exhibition of his woodcuts this summer at the Cleveland Museum of Art. **Gustave Baumann: Hands of a Craftsman, Heart of an Artist**, opens June 4 and remains on view in the museum's prints and drawings galleries through August 25, 1996. Admission is free.

Gustave Baumann (1881-1971) made some of the most extraordinary color woodcuts of the first half of the 20th century. His marvelous sense of color, exemplary craftsmanship, and ability to capture the flavor of each locale in which he worked, made his prints popular with the public and honored among his peers. Jane Glaubinger, curator of prints at the Cleveland Museum, says: "Baumann is one of the greats. He was an extremely skilled perfectionist who took the color woodcut technique and made it his own, performing each task himself--including even making his own inks--and raising the medium to new heights of complexity." Most of his oeuvre was inspired by trips to California, the Grand Canyon, and countless locales in New Mexico--southwestern landscapes, ancient Indian petroglyphs, traditional Pueblo life, and spring and summer gardens and orchards.

The Cleveland venue of **Hands of a Craftsman, Heart of an Artist** presents fifty-six prints (including two from Cleveland's collection) that span the artist's sixty-year career, six related gouaches (opaque watercolors), and examples of the woodblocks and color separation proofs that demonstrate how the prints were made. The exhibition takes its name from the logo Baumann stamped on each print: the image of a hand opened over a heart, an apt emblem for a devoted artist who found fulfillment in working with his hands.

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Baumann was ten when his family emigrated to Chicago, and, as the oldest of four children, left school early to help support his family. Employed in commercial art, the enterprising Baumann attended evening drawing classes at The Art Institute of Chicago. He saved enough money to spend the year 1905 at the Royal School of Arts and Crafts in Munich, where he learned printmaking and realized his goal of making art that was accessible to everyone--"to produce good pictures at low cost." He adopted a style typical of Munich printmaking--bold, flat areas of color placed adjacent to one another without the interruption of a black outline.

In 1910, fellow artists suggested he vacation in Brown County in rustic, southern Indiana. Captivated by the picturesque scenery, he stayed seven years. There, he created such works as *The Mill Pond* and *Harden Hollow, Nashville, Indiana*, using as many as six or seven wood blocks (one block per color), overprinting translucent inks to achieve intermediate colors. He also began his lifelong practice of framing his compositions with a distinctive dashed or dotted border.

In 1917, Baumann visited several places in the Northeast. In Provincetown, on Cape Cod, he produced woodcuts with the subdued hues of weathered clapboard houses and blue-gray sea; a sojourn in New York City, in contrast, gave rise to the flag-filled *Fifth Avenue* (1917), commemorating America's entry into World War I, in which stark white skyscrapers are silhouetted against a brilliant blue sky. *Fifth Avenue* was in the first major touring exhibition of Baumann's prints in 1918, which, coincidentally, traveled to the Cleveland Museum of Art.

The works for which Baumann is best known and most appreciated were executed in Sante Fe, New Mexico, already a magnet for artists when he settled there in 1918. Baumann had an extraordinary ability to translate the bright sunlight and colors of the American southwest into his gouache studies and woodcuts. In *Grand Canyon* (1919), rock formations are colored in violet, ochre, and rose under an intense blue sky, with a little bit of the blue-green Colorado River in the lower center; highlights on the earth convey alpenglow, the evening reillumination of cliff walls and summits observed after the chasms have passed into shadow. In *Cholla and Saguaro* (1925), the textured, tan paper serves as the color of the desert floor beneath the cacti and other native plants, and Baumann rendered shimmering passages of shade by printing blue over black. In *Tares* (1952), a close-up view of dandelion flowers gone to seed, Baumann defined the beauty of a common weed by intricately carving his wood blocks, capturing the sensation of slender, free-standing, resilient stalks floating in a breeze. *Night Ceremony* (1937-42), from

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Cleveland's collection, is the most abstract work Baumann ever made; inspired by the patterns on Santa Clara Pueblo ceramic pots, with their jet black and burnished luster, he printed it in tones of gray, black, and silver.

Publication of *Gustave Baumann: Nearer to Art* by the Museum of New Mexico Press coincides with this traveling exhibition. The fully illustrated book contains 125 color plates, and has received numerous awards including Second Prize at the 1994 American Association of Museums Design Competition, and Best Illustrated Book of 1994 by the Rocky Mountain Book Publishers Association. It is available in the Museum Store for \$45 (clothbound).

On Wednesday evening, July 17, at 7:30 pm, David Acton, co-author of *Gustave Baumann: Nearer to Art*, will speak at the museum on "Gustave Baumann and the Craft of Color Woodcuts." Acton is curator of prints and drawings at the Worcester Art Museum (Massachusetts), and author of the forthcoming book *Hand of a Craftsman: The Woodcut Technique of Gustave Baumann*, which will also be available in the Museum Store (clothbound, \$39.95). Acton's lecture is part of "Summer Evenings," the museum's annual three-month array of films, concerts, gallery tours, and many other events. Dale Hilton of the Cleveland Museum's department of education and public programs will give gallery talks in the exhibition on Wednesday, July 3, and Sunday, July 7, at 1:30 pm.

The exhibition has been organized by the Museum of Fine Arts (Santa Fe), Museum of New Mexico from its extensive collection of Baumann prints and archives, and circulated through TREX: The Traveling Exhibitions Programs of the Museum of New Mexico, supported by grants from the Museum of New Mexico Foundation and private donors. Cleveland is the final venue.

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# The Cleveland Museum of Art

## **Gustave Baumann: Hands of a Craftsman, Heart of an Artist** **June 4 - August 25, 1996**

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Cholla and Sahuaro*, 1925

Color woodcut

H. 12 5/8 x W. 12 3/4 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Grand Canyon*, 1919

Color woodcut

H. 12 5/8 x W. 12 7/8 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*The Inland Printer*, March 1909

Color woodcut

H. 12 3/8 x W. 10 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, (1881 - 1971)

*Morning Sun*, 1931

Color woodcut

H. 10 3/4 x W. 9 5/8 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Palo Verde and Ocotillo*, 1925

Color woodcut

H. 9 3/8 x W. 11 1/4 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Procession*, 1928

Color woodcut

H. 13 x W. 12 3/4 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
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Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971  
*Rain in the Mountains*, 1922-24

Color woodcut

H. 9 x H. 11 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Singing Trees*, 1926

H. 12 $\frac{3}{4}$  x W. 12  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Color woodcut

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, 1881 - 1971

*Summer Rain*, 1926

Color woodcut

H. 9 x W. 11 in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

Gustave Baumann, (1881 - 1971)

*Untitled (Strangers from Hopi Land)*, 1921-22

Color woodcut

H. 10  $\frac{1}{2}$  x W. 9  $\frac{1}{2}$  in.

Collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Museum of New Mexico,  
from funds raised by the School of American Research, 1952-53

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